

INTRODUCTION

When varying challenges strike us as individuals or families, the fabric of society usually remains constant. This sometimes acts, no matter how vaguely at the time, as a buffer, for it continues to go on, even if, numb with grief, we sometimes may wonder why. Eventually, as we link back up with those things with which we are most familiar, a sense of normality returns. But when every family in a city of almost 450,000 people has simultaneously been struck by personal calamity of varying degrees, nothing seems as though it will ever be normal again.

And so it has been for the people of Christchurch, and also those in the outlying areas of Canterbury, for which the city has always been, and always will be, a main artery and focal point for the region, for it is almost impossible to think of Canterbury without Christchurch. Some have suffered the incalculable loss of almost every one of their workmates. Others lost beloved husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, relations and friends. And the common thread running through these unimaginably painful losses is that each one was so treasured and loved.

When destruction and chaos strikes at the heart of our lives, our homes and our city, it is of little surprise that many may wonder if we can ever rise above it. Yet our history points to the answer, for Cantabrians are no strangers to hardship, adversity, tragedy, and also triumph and victory. This is what has made us strong. It is that hard-won strength, and the stoic determination to press on and look to the future, that many admire in Cantabrians.

For these reasons, this book takes a brief look at past challenges and tragedies our ancestors have had to overcome, and salutes them. It reviews past accomplishments, too. It also offers a glimpse of our beloved city before the earthquakes. However, its main focus is on the many outstanding photos that show what we are still able to enjoy in Canterbury. Combined with these images are heartfelt, beautiful messages from fellow Cantabrians who share what they love about the city and its people, and their dreams for the future city of Christchurch. The final chapters present exciting concepts created by some of our most talented architects. It's wonderful to be able to look forward to the future and contribute what we can to make it great.

Recently I explained the concept of this book to a colleague. I asked her if she thought it was something that could possibly help as people began to pick up the shattered pieces of their lives. She replied that she had just experienced a particularly torrid week in Christchurch, so instead of a night out she went home

to rest. As she tidied her bookshelf one particular book fell out, which happened to be on the history of Christchurch and Canterbury. She leafed through the contents and pored over past tragedies and triumphs of our ancestors. As she looked through the book, for the first time since the earthquakes she thought, 'Yes, we *can* do this! We *can* rebuild and we *can* move on and there is great hope for the future.' She felt that this book would also give people that gift, and it would help inspire people to carry on. I sincerely hope it does.

I would love to be able to wave a magic wand and have a big sign appear in the sky that reads: 'Christchurch, there will be no more earthquakes!' I would also have it repair all the damaged homes, remove all the liquefaction, restore all the old buildings and of course have everyone safe. That model of wand isn't out yet, but hopefully we can help to encourage positive dreams for our city with this book.

It is a book that has been created by Cantabrians, or people who have called it home. It is for all who live in Canterbury, and for Kiwis and people everywhere who love all that's great about this region. It seeks to remind us of what we still have to enjoy here, and why we love it. It also shows that we can restore our city, we can help mend broken hearts, and together we can live and love in this fine city of Christchurch again.

We will create a beautiful city by building on the strong foundations of our past. By combining this with our great people and wonderful ideas, we can create an even richer future. That is *Christchurch Dreaming*.

Kia kaha, Christchurch and Canterbury, we love you.
Arohanui,

Mary

Previous:

Canoeing on the Avon
Spring, Christchurch.